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# THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

## THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO THE STRUGGLING CLASSES. III

### A READING COURSE FOR MINISTERS

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*It is with profound sorrow that we have to announce the death of PROFESSOR HENDERSON. He died broken down by his devotion to the cause of the unemployed. We are, however, glad to say that the course, "The Duty of the Church in Relation to the Struggling Classes," will be continued by PROFESSOR ALLAN HOBEN of the University of Chicago. PROFESSOR HOBEN is one of the best-known workers in the field of social service. He has been field secretary of the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, is president of the Hyde Park Center, Chicago, is author of "THE MINISTER AND THE BOY," as well as of many articles dealing with social matters. Those who have been following this course of studies need have no apprehensions as to the character and value of the succeeding studies.*

### Part III. Juvenile Delinquency: Its Nature, Extent, and Causes

#### REQUIRED READING

C. R. Henderson, *Dependent, Defective and Delinquent Classes*, Part IV.

Thomas Travis, *The Young Malefactor*.<sup>1</sup>  
New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

#### COLLATERAL READING

Breckinridge and Abbott, *The Delinquent Child and the Home*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1912.

W. Douglas Morrison, *Juvenile Offenders*. New York: Appleton, 1897. (Treats of conditions in Great Britain and has not been brought up to date.)

C. R. Henderson, *Preventive Agencies and Methods*, chaps. i, ii, vii, and especially viii. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910.

Thomas D. Eliot, *The Juvenile Court and the Community*. New York: Macmillan, 1914. (A critical review of the function and present status of juvenile courts in the United States.)

Hastings H. Hart, *Preventive Treatment of Neglected Children*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910. (Part I, "Institutions for Delinquent Children," and Part V, "The Placing-out System.")

Flexner and Baldwin, *Juvenile Courts and Probation*. New York: Century Co., 1915.

Ruth S. True, *Boyhood and Lawlessness and the Neglected Girl*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1915. (A minute description of conditions contributing to juvenile delinquency in New York's West Side.)

<sup>1</sup> Added to original list published in the introductory study of the course.

Louise De Koven Bowen, *Safeguards for City Youth at Work and at Play*. New York: Macmillan, 1914. (Very valuable in its descriptions of unfavorable conditions in Chicago and of methods which were successfully used in amelioration and reform.)

William Healy, *The Individual Delinquent*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1915. (A close scientific study; very valuable in its elaboration of the psychopathic clinic.)

Allan Hoben, *The Minister and the Boy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1913. (Preventive and constructive method from the minister's point of view. See also article on "The Church and Child Protection," *Biblical World*, March, 1913.)

The remaining studies of this course will center about the very important problem of juvenile delinquency. With the child in our midst we shall see the humane aspect of every problem of the struggling classes; and, measured by the standards of Jesus, we shall try to show in what degree modern society "offends these little ones." What is more important, we shall hope to indicate how the church may perform her duty in the light of this need and in loving obedience to the Christ.

Study III will consider the scope and nature of the problem and some causes of juvenile delinquency. Study IV will take up court treatment and reformatory institutions; and in Study V voluntary associations and church co-operation will be treated.

### 1. Scope and Nature of the Problem

*Definition of delinquent.*—Hurd, *Revised Statutes of Illinois*, chap. xxiii, § 169:

Any male child who, while under the age of seventeen years, or any female child

who, while under the age of eighteen years, violates any law of the state; or is incorrigible, or knowingly associates with thieves, vicious or immoral persons; or without just cause and without the consent of its parents, guardian, or custodian, absents itself from its home or place of abode; or is growing up in idleness or crime; or knowingly frequents a house of ill repute; or knowingly frequents any policy shop or place where any gambling device is operated; or frequents any saloon or dram shop where intoxicating liquors are sold; or patronizes or visits any public poolroom or bucket shop; or wanders about the street in the night time without being on any lawful business or lawful occupation; or habitually wanders about any railroad yards or tracks, or jumps or attempts to jump on any moving train; or enters into any car or engine without lawful authority; or uses vile, obscene, vulgar, profane, or indecent language in any public place or about any schoolhouse; or is guilty of indecent or lascivious conduct.

*Object of law.*—Notice how this extract from the law of April, 1899, establishing the first juvenile court in the United States defines delinquency in very broad terms. The object of this inclusive definition, no doubt, was to insure to the state the maximum right to dispute the old doctrine of the absolute parental ownership of children and to enforce the rights of the child to moral protection, and the rights of the state to safeguard its future citizens.

*Amount of delinquency.*—However, the scope of delinquency as thus defined would include *all* boys at some time and in some degree, while most girls, perhaps, would not be found within the area of conduct defined. What actually happens is that about 20 per cent of all boys in our larger cities come into conflict with the law, while about one-fifth

as many girls appear in court as delinquents. This is not an index of the absolute delinquency of a community, for, with few exceptions, only the children of the poor, the ignorant, and the foreign-born are thus taken in hand by the law. The statistics of the Cook County Juvenile Court for the ten-year period, 1899-1909, show 11,413 cases of boys and 2,770 cases of girls treated. This ratio probably holds true for the whole country with a marked tendency among girls to increase their percentage.

*Leading forms of delinquency.*—As to the nature of offenses, some 80 per cent of the boys will be charged with offenses against property—usually stealing in some form; and an equal percentage of girls will be charged with incorrigibility and immorality. These facts should be studied in the light of biological differences, home training, play radius, group life, etc.

## 2. Some Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

*Physical defect.*—Here much has been made of hereditary degeneracy of the nervous system producing epilepsy—especially dangerous in its veiled forms, and all types of subnormals from the idiot up to the moron and, in some cases, the retarded child. Among first offenders, however, taint of this sort will not show a high percentage. It is among the repeaters that these ineradicable factors most appear. It becomes essential that all such cases be detected and removed from general society for specialized treatment and care and for society's physical and moral safety.

Other forms of minor physical defect are fruitful causes of delinquency when undetected and uncured. Defective

sight or hearing, causing a child to appear stupid in school, to lose grade and therefore interest and social pride, to play truant, run with gangs, and live in fear of both school and home, operates in this way. So also of defective teeth which harbor germs causing frequent illness, devitalizing the child and debaring him from happy and normal progress with his natural group; and adenoids which induce stupidity, irritability, and lack of power to resist suggestion.

In this connection consider the necessity of adequate physical examination in schools and of a public policy to protect the health and to develop the joyous vigor of children.

*Home conditions.*—The delinquency problem centers here. Consider the effect upon the children of the loss or incapacity of father or mother or of both; the cost of parental ignorance, indifference, immorality; the problem of estrangement between foreign-born parents and American-reared children; disagreements over wages of minors at work; poverty entailing domestic and social incompetence in the home; the introduction of roomers and boarders to eke out a living; the child's dispossession from permanent rights and loyalties which should attach to the home; the crushing and saloon-ridden environment in which the delinquency-producing homes are forcibly and closely massed.

Canvass thoughtfully the present tendency to substitute in settlements playgrounds, social centers, etc., the glad activities, charm, and enrichment of life which ideally belong to the normal home.

*Economic conditions.*—These bear upon the stability and efficiency of the

home in terms of wage, regularity of employment, permanency of location, industrial insurance, accident, sick and death benefits, hours of labor, opportunity for home ownership and development, regulation of real estate manipulation and greed as represented in prices, rentals and living space both within and without the dwelling. The normal family home must rest upon a sound economic basis. Social injustice in this respect contributes to delinquency.

Another economic factor consists of the incompetence of the great mass of children leaving school between the fifth and eighth grades and being wholly unfit for remunerative, intelligent and progressive employment. These very largely repeat the tragedy of poverty which blighted their own lives. Besides, many of them are much of the time out of work or "hunting a job" and fall into street occupations or idle and vicious ways. Without vocational training and direction they become work-shy, non-productive, anti-social, criminal.

*Other social causes.*—Among these are the undirected gang-life of boys, heightening the adventure instinct and perverting the desire for distinction, criminal suggestion in public press and

uncensored nickel shows, injudicious advertising and display, carelessness in protecting goods and so in protecting the tempted, extravagance and immodesty in dress, saloons, indecent public dance halls, poolrooms, the failure of Christian people to use their own homes as social centers, lack of clean facilities for social recreation, lack of moral training which guarantees inner spiritual control, failure to secure youth's dedication to a high, worthy, and positive purpose in life.

### Topics for Discussion

1. How far is the state justified in curtailing traditional parental rights? (See Breckinridge, *Survey*, February 4, 1911.)

2. Why do boys outnumber girls in delinquency?

3. What measures does your community follow in order to detect and correct physical defect in children?

4. In what ways does the saloon contribute to delinquency?

5. What are the state laws and city ordinances regulating poolrooms, public dance halls, street vending, and nickel shows in your community?

6. Upon the basis of material in the Gospels what deductions, if any, may we make as to Jesus' estimate of childhood?

## SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES USING THE COURSE "THE MESSAGE OF JESUS TO OUR MODERN LIFE"

### STUDY VII

#### THE STATE AND POLITICAL LIFE

The subject for the present month is one which should command the earnest attention of every member of the group. The present crisis in international affairs is

interpreted by many as the failure of Christianity to operate in international relationships. The settlement of the question of war in the future will depend on the young